



Issue #2, January 1998
Happy New Year!

Small loans bring big opportunities

UNDP has tentatively contracted an American NGO to assist in distributing over US \$600,000 in microcredit loans. Called Microstart, the fund was established by UNDP after last summer's microcredit summit in Ulaanbaatar. The project's total cost is US \$1 million, with a third of the funds being allocated to service provider ACDI/VOCI and the salaries of loan officers in all 21 aimags.

The project kicks off at the start of 1998 once all the loan officers, the so-called international and local Technical Support Providers (ITSP, LTSP), have been hired.

Ms. Sukhjargalmaa, Poverty Eradica-

tion Programme Officer, said Microstart is urgently needed. "The main problem for the poor is their access to credit. The Microstart project will provide this opportunity to the poor for income-generating activities."

Across Mongolia there is a desperate need for access to credit. Many who want to start businesses can't because the banks are unwilling to give loans to the poor. Another objective of Microstart is to promote the development of microfinancing organizations at the grassroots level. It is hoped, once established, these institutions will build the foundations for economic opportunity for the poor.

AIDS awareness campaign gets a boost

World AIDS Day on December 1 took a new twist in Mongolia with the launching of the premiere issue of the Mongolian AIDS Bulletin and the country's first AIDS fundraiser.

The bi-monthly Bulletin is endorsed by the National AIDS Committee, headed by Prime Minister Enkhsaikhon, and is intended to support new strategies to combat STDs and HIV/AIDS. Over 5,000 copies of the Bulletin are being distributed across the country.

Dr. Altanchimeg, the Bulletin's Editor-in-Chief, launched the magazine at Mongolia's first AIDS fundraiser. Held at an Ulaanbaatar disco, the benefit raised more than Tg 100,000 to be used for AIDS prevention activities.

In partnership with the Government of Mongolia, posters were distributed to bars, restaurants and markets on December 1. Buses and trolley buses played over 200 audio cassettes giving advice on STD/HIV/AIDS prevention. The media blitz also included television and radio programming. According to Mr. Davaajav, head of Ulaanbaatar's STD Care Centre, 200,000 people were involved in December 1 activities.

United Nations Homepage a success!

After only one month and with no advertising, the United Nations homepage has already had more than 377 visitors from around the world. The busiest day was December 19, when 21 Internet users explored the site. Home to all the United Nations agencies working in Mongolia, the site also offers the latest news on UN activities here.

There are currently more than 70 Internet sites on Mongolia, compared to just one this time last year. While around 40 per cent of the visitors to the UN site were from the United States, the rest span an impressive range of countries. Hits were recorded from Mongolia, Germany, Holland, Japan, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, Russia, France, Portugal, Belgium, Taiwan, Ireland, Finland, Denmark, Sri Lanka, Slovenia and Poland.

The guestbook recorded a wide range of interests in the homepage.

From Holland, Jaap Tjassens Keiser asked, "It is interesting to find Mongolia is accessible through e-mail. Mongolian people tell me poverty is increasing. How is the situation at this moment?"

Dorj from Japan was quick and to the point with "Cool!! Keep it up!"

Some of the comments from Mongolians were frank and hard-hitting. H. Haliun said, "If the United Nations is in Mongolia, why are there so many poor and homeless children, old people and adults?" H. Hongorzul said, "I expect that the poor people and homeless are all over the world, but in Mongolia, day by day, there are more and more. ...I know that some people are getting protest against the government."

Advertisements will be placed in Mongolian and international newspapers/magazines to promote the site.

Source: NedStat

**Where the Steppe Meets
the Internet**

Sustainable Development in Mongolia

United Nations Homepage: www.un-mongolia.mn
E-mail: dsouth@undp.org.mn



A UNDP/PAPO team delivered donated clothes from World Vision to this daycare centre in Dornogovi aimag.

Mongolia to learn from New Zealand reform experience

A group of government officials (Minister of Finance, parliamentarians and others) headed to New Zealand to undertake an overall assessment and review of New Zealand reform process and its implementation in practice. The study tour to New Zealand and Australia has been arranged by UNDP in close cooperation with the Asian Development Bank.

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News in a flash

The famous cheese factory in Altanbulag soum, providing gouda-style cheese, is set to expand soon. The project is establishing another factory in Atar soum, which is projected to be completed by the end of 1998. It will produce a range of dairy products including cheese, yogurt, Mongolian quark and creams.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator's office has been overwhelmed by the response to the Let's Make Life Better contest. More than 600 project proposals from Mongolian youth between 20 and 30 have been received.

Back in October, youth across the country were asked to dream about a better Mongolia. They were asked to think of a small-scale project that would truly make life better in their community. The winning project receives US \$1,000 and the advice of UN development workers.

Jerry van Mourik, Support Officer to the UN Resident Coordinator, estimates it will take at least two months to sift through all the proposals before a winner can be announced.

Six regional training centres for journalists opened at the beginning of November. Located in Uvurkhangai, Zavkhan, Dundgovi, Khovd, Khentii and Darkhan-Uul aimags, the centres are satellite offices of the Press Institute of Mongolia.

The centres are part of an innovative concept to provide not only training to journalists, but also access to advocacy support, an information database and a venue to hold press conferences.

Journalists outside of Ulaanbaatar suffer from many handicaps, including poor communications with the capital and the outside world. They are also disadvantaged when it comes to support from fellow journalists, who are few and far between in the countryside.

Mr. Ariunbat, Regional Programme Coordinator at the Press Institute, believes information technology is an essential tool for all journalists.

"There are windows of cooperation between these training centres and Citizen Information Service Centres (a project of UNDP's governance programme). Journalists could use the computer facility of the CISCs to access the latest information. It is difficult to imagine today's journalists without access to this kind of technology."

The centres are funded under UNDP's Consolidation of Democracy through Strengthening of Journalism Project.



Dutch Ambassador gets a whiff of good gouda

Mongolia discovers fields of gold

By Laura Ryser, MAP-21 Project Adviser

At a December 4 workshop, independent construction contractors were encouraged to go into building energy-efficient houses out of straw bales. Calling straw bales "fields of gold" ready to be "mined", UNDP Resident Representative Douglas Gardner told the gathering at the Press Institute that energy-efficient housing is ripe for private-sector involvement. Approximately 85 people from nine aimags, including representatives of key ministries, attended the workshop organized by MAP-21, UNDP and the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA).

Besides reducing heating costs by up to 90 per cent, this industry has enormous potential to create employment. So far, UNDP has constructed a health clinic and a centre for the Mongolian Women's Federation. The Poverty Alleviation Programme Office has constructed five buildings, ADRA is constructing six and the city of Ulaanbaatar has built 35 buildings. Over the next couple of years, UNDP will be building approximately 98 more super-insulated buildings. 163 people have been exposed to on-the-job training on constructing straw-bale buildings. A fine example of opening more opportunity for people is Ms. Oyunchimeg. According to Mr. S. Ganbold, National Project Manager, "Oyunchimeg is a mother from Sukhbaatar aimag, who was previously unemployed. Today, she has a teacher certificate. In the future she would like to organize a construction crew for straw-bale buildings, including private homes for Sukhbaatar and other places."

Mr. N. Tsend, Sustainable Development Officer, said "We usually mine gold from deposits. But now we have an opportunity to extract gold from straw."

Tumen River regional project is to expand

Intergovernmental meetings in Beijing (17-18 November 1997) brought together vice ministers and government officials from the member countries of the UNDP Tumen River Area Development Programme (TRADP) - Mongolia, China, South and North Korea and Russia. The meeting was the third since the signing of the agreement to establish the Tumen Intergovernmental Institutions at the United Nations in 1995. UNDP's core contribution for technical assistance for the development of the Tumen region amounts to US \$3.4 million for the period from 1997 to 1999. The UNDP support will be facilitating regional cooperation in trade development, investment promotion and environmental management while promoting sustainable economic and social development in Northeast Asia and the Tumen River Economic Development Area (TREDA) in particular.

The next intergovernmental meeting is announced to be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in August 1998.

Up Close and Personal

Exclusive interview with Ms. D. Jargalsaikhan, Administrative Officer, UNDP

When did you join the UN?
February, 1993

How do you see the difference between the UNDP at the time you started and now?
Everything is in a constant change as well as our office. I strongly believe in that whatever is the change it is aimed at making our life and our office better every day.



What do you expect from people surrounding you?
Not much, really. Just be friendly and always remember that we are all members of a big UN FAMILY!!!
What is your background?
Interpreter/translator of Spanish, English and Russian.

(cont. on page 4)



In the field

The View From Murun

By Matthew Heller, Khuvsgul-based UNV

"How can people survive living like this?" was all I could think during my first trip to the countryside in Khuvsgul aimag. I went with my national UNV counterpart and a financial officer from the aimag central government to Tunel soum. I wanted to see for myself the situation in rural villages in Khuvsgul. Tunel is only 45 km from Murun, the aimag capital, but over half the population lives below the poverty line and a third live in "extreme poverty." This means less than half the population has a monthly income of Tg 9,420 or US \$11.77, and a third has less than Tg 6,500 per month or US \$8.12. These kinds of numbers shed a different light on international UNVs fighting for a pay increase from Bonn. It is understandable why they don't understand when I introduce myself as a volunteer yet make more than 77 times what they do in a month.

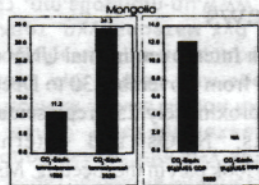
It is a myth that herders are self-sufficient and only people in cities and aimag centres are suffering. The statistics on poor households in Khuvsgul indicate that many of them are herders. They are families living in remote areas, they usually have between four and eight children, and less than 20 head of livestock per family member. Their herds are not sustainable, they cannot provide themselves with a sufficient amount of meat, nor money to buy flour or tea. There is not enough grazing land and when people migrate to their seasonal pastures they often find another family's herd has grazed there already.

I set out to do a needs assessment of the aimag, but soon I realized that I would only have to sit in my office and wait for people to come to me. After several outreach programs to the public through the aimag's media, people began to steadily pour into my office. The head of the Veterinary Hospital wants me to help get a new laboratory to test the quality of meat in the market. Soum and bag governors come in with maps and diagrams, plans for farms and cultural centres and bread factories, hoping I will give them money. A poor man wants to take me to his house for lunch to see how his family lives - he says he has no wood and he is cold, no clothes for his children so they can't go to school, no food so his family starves; skills so he cannot work. He asks, "Won't you tell the Poverty Alleviation Programme Office to give me a loan? You can do that. can't you? My family needs it so very badly..." Ordinary people come in just to talk with me; they have heard there is a foreigner working in the government building who speaks Mongolian. They tell me to come home with them, meet their family, teach their children English.

Establishing a Citizen Information Service Centre has been the main thrust of

UNDP's Decentralization and Democracy Support project this fall. Presently the aimag CISC is a library of sorts, with information on international aid projects being implemented in the aimag, as well as information on Mongolian laws concerning human rights and democracy. In January, Khuvsgul aimag will become the third aimag equipped with a working CISC with computers, printers, and a copy machine. With the new modernized CISC, we hope to attract more of the public and increase participation of citizens in decision making of local government issues. Three soum governors have also expressed a desire to establish similar CISCs in their areas, and with our modern equipment, it should be easy to outfit and update these remote Centres with information concerning local governance strategies.

We have begun teaching seminars at the soum and bag level about participatory methods of self-governance. These will support grassroots activism, enabling communities to get together and initiate development on their own while consciously involving all sectors, especially women and the poor. For development to be sustainable, those directly effected must decide on the solution; only they themselves know what issues are most important.



Mongolia tops in production of greenhouse gases per person

Mongolia's delegates to December's Kyoto convention on climate change heard that their country is producing twice the global average in greenhouse gases (GHG). Global warming for the last 50 years has had a negative effect on Mongolia's development, including poor health because of pollution, desertification, water tables drying up and disruption of livestock.

The Mongolian delegation to the conference consisted of the Minister of Nature and Environment Mr. Ts. Adyasuren, and researchers and government officials. At an Ulaanbaatar press conference after Kyoto, Mr. D. Dagvadorj, Secretary of the Meteorological Institute, said more than 60 per cent of GHG in Mongolia is coming from power stations. With assistance from the Asian Development Bank, a research project was carried out to reduce the GHG. In the future it is important to take measures to decrease coal use, introduce other sources of energy (solar, wind power), control vehicle pollution and improve plantation of trees. If these measures are taken by 2020, it is possible to reduce GHG by 11 per cent. The Government says that in 1995 about 10 million tons of GHG was produced in Mongolia.

News in a flash

Journalists working for electronic media will soon be able to make use of a new training facility to be established at the Press Institute of Mongolia. The facility will include advanced radio and TV equipment and is being funded by the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), the communications arm of UNESCO.

The Press Institute of Mongolia applied for the project last year and the project was approved earlier this year with IPDC donating a total of US \$37,000. The funding will cover the purchase of equipment for the studio and the renovation and sound-proofing of a room at the PIM, which will function as a studio. Various training programmes are to be scheduled following the completion of the renovation of and installation of the equipment in the studio.

UNDP's "Think Tank" project has made many Mongolian workers happy, convincing the Government of Mongolia to legislate a five-day work week. Passed by Parliament in December, the shorter work week began with the new year. Prime Minister Enkhsaikhon called the move an opportunity for all Mongolians, leaving more time for family care, leisure, running small businesses, earning extra income and improving education.

By working fewer days, more than Tg 2 billion will be saved since buildings will not be heated and the lights turned off on Saturdays. It is believed this will result in salary increases of 15 per cent and the creation of 6,000 jobs.

The "Think Tank" is part of UNDP's Governance and Economic Transition Programme, and is meant to be a topical forum for policy debate based on new research.

On 5 December 1997, the number of Citizen Information Service Centres (CISC) increased by one. Funded under a UNDP project to increase the free flow of information, the CISC is located in Ulaanbaatar's mayor's office, just steps away from the famous Sukhbaatar Square.

Equipped with eight computers and a small reference library, the centre is linked to other CISCs (in Tuv and

Uvurkhangai aimags), to the Internet and to Government of Mongolia databases. The next CISCs will be open in Khuvsgul and Khovd aimags. Address of the CISC in Ulaanbaatar: Sukhbaatar square, AGFA photo agency.





UNDP fundraising activities

Pre-school education

From the beginning of 1998, a three-year pre-school education project will start its implementation upon the signing of the project document by UNDP and the Government of Mongolia (Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture). The project is cost-shared between the Government of Netherlands (US\$1,050,000) and Save the Children Fund (US\$480,000).

The assistance will be channeled through the Poverty Alleviation Programme Office. Activities include kindergarten repairs and establishment of ger kindergartens, outreach to very poor households, establishment of community kindergartens and training of community education volunteers, preparatory courses for entrants to basic education, toy production and preparation of materials, establishment of kindergarten farms.

The Mongolian government input is Tg 24 billion for a three year period.

Enterprise Restructuring

A total of US \$2,603,800 is being mobilized from the Dutch government for enterprise restructuring in Mongolia. The project objective is to strengthen enterprises in the transition to a market economy, by building management capacities of executives in a selected group of enterprises in reforming their operations, supporting the resolve of Mongolian institutions to undertake reform of viable enterprises. The project is expected to help create a more dynamic private sector.

Poverty

The UNDP-funded Poverty Alleviation project is being amended due to a SIDA (Sweden) contribution of US \$1,998,200, agreed but not yet approved. The input will be utilized for the National Poverty Alleviation Programme support activities, enabling the Government to support income- and employment-generation activities for 10,000 poor households and poor women, while expanding the national UNV programme.

Arrivals/Departures

Ms. S. Tuul, Personal Assistant to the RR, has moved to the US to study and has been replaced by Mr. Tuvshin, former GET Team Programme Clerk. Mr. Paul Grocnewegen, JPO from the Netherlands is to take Mr. Sorenson's place for the Natural Resources Team. Ms. Minerva Coronacion (Philippines) joined the office as a UNV Specialist in Rural Business Promotion, Dundgobi Aimag. Ms. Catherine Johnson, UNV Documentalist for the Press Institute is expected to arrive on 21 January. Mr. Ajamdar Rai, UNV Family Farming Specialist for INT/97/V01-Support to Pilot UNV/GTZ Collaboration in China, Cambodia and Mongolia is scheduled to arrive in the last week of January.

A PARTNERSHIP FOR PROGRESS

THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN MONGOLIA



New publication explains UNDP in Mongolia

Taking its name from UNDP's compact with the Mongolian Government, Partnership for Progress is a 10-page colour brochure that details the recent history of Mongolia and the work of UNDP. A publication of UNDP Mongolia's Communications Office, the brochure is just one part of a larger strategy to better explain development issues and UNDP's role. At the end of January, a new 50-page book, The Guide to UNDP in Mongolia, will be available in English and Mongolian. This book details each UNDP project and offers a directory of contacts and key information on Mongolia. As with all UNDP materials, Internet surfers can find copies of publications at the United Nations Homepage, www.un-mongolia.mn. Copies of all publications are also available from the Communications Office.

UNV News

The Fourth Intergovernmental UNV meeting was held from November 30 to December 4 in Bonn. Approximately 250 representatives of governments, NGOs and international organisations took part in the meeting. Ms. Onon, National Project Coordinator, and Ms. Ariuna, Decentralization Project, participated from Mongolia. "In general the major subject of the meeting was the role of UNVs, both international and national, in the 21st century," said Ms. Onon. At the moment, 51 international and national UNVs are working in Mongolia.

(cont. from page 2)

How many children have you got?

I have two lovely girls.

What is your hobby?

Reading (the topic varies depending on the mood and life/work situation)

Your favourite band (singer)?

"Chingis Khan" band and its famous pop singer

December 5 is set aside as a day to celebrate the spirit of volunteerism and the work of volunteers.

This year, UNVs joined other volunteers in Mongolia and NGOs to collect second-hand clothes for distribution to street children, the homeless and the poor and disabled. A total of over 30 boxes of clothes were delivered. At the Art Gallery an NGO exhibition took place, including a performance by blind singers.

Jargalsaikhan (not for the namesake). I like all his songs, they are all beautiful.

Are you happy? Why?

Yes, I am happy because I have a lovely family and good friends who are always with me. And of course a "crazy" job which does bring me a satisfaction as well as an appreciation for it.

We accept letters! All letters should be no more than 200 words in length. News briefs should be a maximum of 100 words each. Field reports should not exceed 350 words.

The Blue Sky Bulletin is a publication of the United Nations Development Programme in Mongolia. The newsletter is published on the first of every month. The next deadline for submissions is January 18.

All submissions must be sent to B. Zoltuya, Information Assistant, c/o Ms. Elbegzaya,

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